

## OSBA Events

### *OSBA Board of Directors meeting*

March 15-16, 2013

### *OSBA Legislative Policy Committee meeting*

March 16-17, 2013

### *Oregon School Employees Wellness Conference*

March 24-26, 2013

### *Finance Campaign Regional*

April 4, 2013

### *NSBA Annual Conference*

April 13-15, 2013

### *OSBA/COSA Legislative Day*

April 19, 2013

### *PACE Day*

April 26, 2013

### *Summer Board Conference*

July 19-21, 2013

## President's Post

### Leaving the shadows behind



Terry Lenchitsky  
OSBA President

The Maori people of the South Pacific have an old saying: "Turn your face to the sun, and the shadows fall behind you."

Over the past year the Oregon School Boards Association has done exactly that. We have turned our faces to the sun, and we have made a new beginning.

Betsy Miller-Jones and her reorganized executive team have made an extraordinary effort to improve the quality and effectiveness of OSBA's staff services to our members. Just as important, she has assigned a high priority to communicating with members and the Board of Directors. The Board has formulated a strong legislative agenda and—over the past year—has hit the op-ed pages of Oregon's major dailies with the message that bolstering public schools must be a central feature of the strategy to achieve long-term prosperity.

### *Listening and communicating*

Last September, OSBA launched a comprehensive survey of its members to ascertain their greatest concerns about the issues that public schools face in Oregon. That online survey showed that members' most urgent concern is school funding.

OSBA's legislative program reflects that concern, and our message for stronger schools has been heard in the halls and committee rooms of the legislature. Just a few weeks ago, *The Oregonian* reported that Republicans and Democrats alike have called for substantially more money for schools than the \$6.15 billion that Governor Kitzhaber has recommended. Republican Representative Bruce Hanna has demanded \$6.3 billion for the next K-12 budget, and this week, the Democratic co-chairs of the Joint Ways and Means Committee recommended \$6.75 billion for K-12.

Even though nobody can say with certainty what the final number will be, we can take heart that many legislators have recognized the ruinous consequences of continued teacher layoffs and ever bigger class sizes.

### *State bonding for school construction and repair*

Building and repairing schools is also a high priority for our members. In testimony to the Senate Education Committee, OSBA legislative specialist Morgan Allen conveyed our association's strong support of Senate Bill 273, which would allocate funds for Oregon's first-ever comprehensive assessment of schools' facilities needs. The bill would also prioritize funding from state bonds in the following ways:

- Build or retrofit instructional space for full-day kindergarten in advance of the kindergarten formula change in 2015.
- Build or retrofit space available for physical education. Analysis shows that districts need more space to handle the PE mandate that begins in 2017.
- Upgrade and retrofit schools to prepare for tsunamis and earthquakes.
- Address health hazards like mold and asbestos.
- Complete construction and repair projects to improve student achievement, which must be top priority if we hope to achieve the governor's 40-40-20 goal.

Although we should not yet pat ourselves on the backs for a legislative "victory" on behalf of schools, we

can certainly be encouraged that Oregon's legislators seem ready to reverse the trend of disinvestment that has afflicted us for so long. In this sense, we have truly turned our face to the sun, and like the Maori, we have begun to leave old shadows behind.

## Strong Schools, Strong State resources online



**Adopt a board resolution to show your support!**

Board chairs and superintendents across the state recently received a mailed packet inviting every district to participate in the Strong Schools, Strong State

campaign. The materials include a large colorful poster detailing the statewide impact of levels of state funding on school districts. This important statewide coalition effort is designed to urge state policymakers to prioritize education among our state investments by supporting adequate and stable funding that ensures a full academic school year for every child in Oregon.

Visit our Strong Schools, Strong State webpage to get online resources that match the materials that were in your packet. We urge you to join us and adopt a board resolution (sample also included in the packet materials) in support of this effort, and use the mailed and online materials to tell policymakers the story of how their investment will yield success for our students, and a strong economy for Oregon.

Find the sample resolution at:

[http://www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Improving\\_Education/S4/StrongSchoolsStrongStateHome.aspx](http://www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Improving_Education/S4/StrongSchoolsStrongStateHome.aspx)

### Keeping You In the Loop

## How critical is PERS reform?

Governor John Kitzhaber has said many times that reforming the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) is essential to raising Oregon's investment in schools. But he's not alone. Board members know too well that PERS cost increases are hurting students.

Just last week, *The Oregonian* reported that a growing list of legislators agrees that reforming PERS is the only way to achieve higher spending for schools. Representative Peter Buckley, Democratic co-chair of the Legislature's joint budget committee, told *The Oregonian* that "the PERS issue is central to how we resolve all this."

### *A history of cruel realities*

For years, school boards have grappled with the cruel realities of laying off teachers and making classes bigger,

largely because K-12 has lost the competition for dollars to causes like new prisons and health care. But the cruelest reality may be PERS, which will cost school districts a whopping increase of \$400 million in the 2013-15 biennium alone. In July, PERS rates for schools will skyrocket from 19 percent to nearly 27 percent, an unsustainable rate of increase. Without changes to the system, PERS' own actuary has indicated that costs will continue to grow into the future.



Betsy Miller-Jones  
Executive Director

In the past, the legislature has engaged in heated and often bitter debate over how best to deal with the "PERS problem," but the problem persists, impacting students in our classrooms at an alarming rate.

### *OSBA's solution*

OSBA believes in a balanced approach to reforming PERS. We support an actuarially sound statewide retirement program for school employees that balances their need for retirement benefits against their employers' need to contain costs and provide vital services to all Oregonians.

OSBA representatives have met with Democratic and Republican legislators to fashion a proposal that ensures fairness to school employees and enables schools to put more dollars into classrooms. Our goal is to prevent the cost of employees' benefits from draining resources away from critical efforts to reduce class sizes and raise student achievement.

### *Senate Bill 754*

The product of our work is SB 754, which would do the following:

- Limit the cost of living adjustments (COLA) for PERS retirees to the first \$24,000 of annual PERS benefits paid, saving approximately \$245 million for schools in the 2013-15 biennium.
- Eliminate the PERS Oregon tax benefit for out-of-state retirees, saving approximately \$16.7 million for schools in the 2013-15 biennium.
- Redirect the six-percent member contribution for Tier 1 and Tier 2 members into the PERS fund to pay down the fund's liability and give employees "some skin in the game." This measure would save approximately \$173 million for schools in the 2013-15 biennium. Note: State law requires PERS Tier 1, Tier 2 and OPSRP members to contribute 6.0 percent of their salary to retirement, but 70 percent of public employers "pick up" the employees' share. The 6.0 percent now goes into an individual account program (IAP) where it behaves like a 401k; the member receives this money at retirement in addition to the standard pension formula.
- Reduce the Money Match annuity rate, saving \$67 million for schools in the 2013-15 biennium. Note: The Money Match, which is unique to Oregon's

pension plan, has generated increased benefits for most retirees who receive it. Under Money Match, at retirement, a member's account balance is doubled, and the resulting balance converts to an annuity that also grows at 8.0 percent annually. Money Match retirees receive the two-percent COLA. This reform would attempt to bring the annuity rate closer to what is available in the commercial annuity market.

- Prevent pension "spiking" and "padding," saving approximately \$39 million for schools in the 2013-15 biennium. Note: Public employees about to retire can apply overtime, vacation pay, unused sick pay and other adjustments to boost the level of final average salary (FAS) used in their pension formulas. The recommended reform would tighten the definition of FAS to mitigate pension-spiking.

How critical is PERS reform? Without it, we cannot realistically expect schools to find the resources they need to reach the goal of higher student achievement, never mind the governor's goal of 40-40-20. School districts will face the options of increasing class size, eliminating programs, reducing staff and/or eliminating instructional days. It's just that simple. A strong, sustainable system of public education is required to support a strong Oregon economy that provides a bright future for our children.

It is the right thing to do.

**Contact your state legislators and urge enactment of SB 754!**

Find your legislators' contact information on the Oregon Legislature's website:

- House - <http://www.leg.state.or.us/house/>
- Senate - <http://www.leg.state.or.us/senate/>

To contact your legislator by phone, call the Capitol Switchboard at 1-800-332-2313.

## OSBA's Student Achievement Gateway puts you in the know

Student achievement is foremost in the minds of Oregon's school boards and ESD boards, which is why OSBA saw an urgent need and took action to fill it. The new online OSBA Student Achievement Gateway can guide you to information you can use now to help students succeed.

The Gateway not only enables board members to put their fingers on information they need quickly and easily, but also serves as a handy starting point for navigating the vast universe of information on student achievement and related issues.

When you visit the Gateway you will find two main streams of resources that align with boards' key responsibilities:

[http://www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Improving\\_Education/SAG/Gateway-Home.aspx](http://www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Improving_Education/SAG/Gateway-Home.aspx)

**Governance:** Here you will find quick access to essential information—the standards and initiatives that must govern your board's decisions. With just a click of your mouse, you will get the latest information relating to:

- Oregon Education Investment Board
- Common Core State Standards
- No Child Left Behind waiver

**Accountability:** This category provides everything your board needs to know about setting goals, measuring and reporting student success, and other areas of accountability:

- Achievement compacts
- Assessment
- Report cards
- Teacher and administrator evaluation and support

The Gateway employs a common navigation system that displays new developments first, and then offers resources for conducting deeper explorations. No need to wade through endless narrative to ferret out the information you want.

The Gateway also accommodates a wide audience of users with varying levels of understanding. A new board member may know little about the basic issues that confront public schools, and may require just the key elements to make informed decisions about student achievement. A veteran board member, however, may want to conduct a deeper exploration of those issues.

For added convenience and access to near-instantaneous help, each topic page provides the contact information of an OSBA staff member who is knowledgeable about that particular topic. Contact Peggy Holstedt, Director of Policy Services, at [pholstedt@osba.org](mailto:pholstedt@osba.org) for more information.

## PACE Day is too good to miss!

April 26th's PACE Day gives you an opportunity to receive training, network with other PACE members and find out how to get the most from your insurance policy. Specifically, you'll learn how to save time and money by using PACE services and why your participation is critical to the success of the pool. You'll also learn what steps the board of trustees has taken to ensure PACE's stability and financial health.

But that's not all. You'll receive training that will help you in your everyday work. Sessions will cover the following important concerns:

- School safety and dealing with crisis before, during and after an incident
- Employment claims and the dangers and expenses you could experience
- Sexual abuse and boundary invasion
- Year-in-review of claims and risk management

### ***PACE will help defray your costs***

PACE considers your attendance so important that we'll cover one hotel night and registration for one person in each PACE member entity. How can you say no to that?

One attendee from each member entity will receive:

- One night hotel
- Registration
- Continental breakfast and lunch
- Conference materials

To take advantage of this great offer, simply choose "Free registration - 1<sup>st</sup> attendee" when you register online.

The cost for each additional attendee is:

- Hotel: \$120/night + 14.5-percent tax
- Registration: \$100 (includes continental breakfast, lunch and conference materials)

When registering, choose "Registration - additional attendees."

Register online at:

[www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/PACE\\_Day-2013.aspx](http://www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/PACE_Day-2013.aspx)

## **Summer Board Conference will hone your leadership skills**

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OSBA's Summer Board Conference (July 19-21) will help make you a more effective leader at a time when effective leadership is critical to raising student achievement, coping with shrinking budgets and answering ever-heavier demands. The conference theme is L.E.A.D. (Listen, Educate, Advocate, Dream), which embraces all the essential elements of leadership in today's education community.

### ***Keynote is James Johnson***

This year's keynote speaker is Dr. James Johnson, who—in addition to his keynote address—will present a workshop for board members. Dr. Johnson is the director of the Urban Investment Strategies Center in the Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His work focuses on the causes and consequences of growing inequality in America, with special emphasis on the problems inequality creates for disadvantaged youth.

### ***Best practices***

A pre-conference day will take place in conjunction with the main conference, featuring a half-day workshop on the latest developments in best practices, as well as other options.

The conference will include presentations by OSBA staff on such topics as legislative issues, fiscal oversight and school safety. Other sessions will present information that districts have shared about best practices in board planning and operations, improving student achievement and much more.

A new feature this year is a vendor showcase that will let members network with major providers of resources to school districts.

The OSBA Summer Board Conference will take place at the beautiful Riverhouse Hotel and Convention Center in Bend, July 19-21. Watch our website [www.osba.org](http://www.osba.org), and *School Leader News* for registration information and materials.

## **'Urban Issues Day' will address shared challenges**

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Although a relatively small percentage of Oregon's 221 school districts qualify as truly "urban," these districts serve a substantial majority of the state's K-12 students.

Because the urban setting creates a special set of challenges and concerns, OSBA will convene "Urban Issues Day" on May 10. School board members from Oregon's 10-15 largest districts will gather at the Salem Convention Center to identify specific issues and recommend ways OSBA can help address them. The meeting will also include ESD representation, community college board members and board members from smaller districts that lie close to urban centers, since issues that arise in cities often affect their suburban and rural neighbors. Dr. Doris McEwen from the Oregon Education Investment Board will address the group.

OSBA members have stressed the need for a special effort to address challenges that are unique to urban schools. Urban Issues Day will bring together OSBA members to focus the association's energy on problems and concerns that most require attention and support. The discussion and conclusions will also guide OSBA's development of an urban issues track for the annual convention next fall. Contact Joe Wehrli, OSBA Director of Board Development, at [jwehrli@osba.org](mailto:jwehrli@osba.org) for more information.

## **Don't forget to register for NSBA's Annual Conference**

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March 22 is the deadline for advance registrations for the NSBA Annual Conference, slated for April 13-15 in San Diego, California. This event is our "national university of boardsmanship" where school board/superintendent teams come together to learn about the innovations in public education, best practices from school boards nationally, and the most significant issues facing America's public schools. Among other features, the conference offers more than 200 sessions focused on student achievement and accountability, innovations in district operations and management, technology and learning, as well as governance and executive leadership.

Register today at <http://annualconference.nsba.org>.

**April 4 – 4:30 - 8:30 pm**  
**West Linn-Wilsonville SD office**



**FREE**  
registration

**FINANCE**  
**CAMPAIGNS**  
BONDS • LOCAL OPTIONS

**Learn how to plan, communicate,  
and pass a finance measure**

Plan to attend the Finance Campaign workshop in Tualatin on April 4. The workshop will cover:

- Information vs. advocacy
- Elements of successful finance elections
- Campaign structures that work
- Voter registration and voter profiles
- Understanding election data
- Building a strategy that works in YOUR district
- ...and more

Register online at:

[http://www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/Finance\\_Campaigns\\_Regional\\_Workshops%20-%20PTLD%202013.aspx](http://www.osba.org/Calendar/Events/Finance_Campaigns_Regional_Workshops%20-%20PTLD%202013.aspx)